



City of Seattle

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Planning Analyst

Norman Abbott, State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Responsible Official
Puget Sound Regional Council
1011 Western Ave, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98104-1035

July 31, 2006

RE: Comments on the Vision 2020 Update DEIS

Dear Mr. Abbott,

The Seattle Planning Commission has reviewed the Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2020 Update Draft Environmental Impact Statement and would like to offer the following initial observations and suggestions.

First of all, the Commission commends the PSRC on its comprehensive approach and thorough analysis of how the Puget Sound region will grow in the next twenty years, as well as its development of several scenarios of how that growth might be accommodated. Seeing the raw numbers and how they translate to actual growth scenarios has given the Commission a new perspective on our challenge as a city to accommodate increases in population and employment.

At this point the Commission favors the Metropolitan Cities alternative or the Larger Cities alternative. These seem to be the more sound options based on planning principles such as environmental impacts, livability, and ensuring linkages between transportation and land use. Accommodating such substantial new growth will require proactive planning so that the Puget Sound region can maintain a high quality of life and continue fostering great livable communities while retaining neighborhood character. As the evaluation moves forward we would like to request that three key provisions be considered; 1) impacts to regional industrial lands, 2) housing affordability, and 3) transportation.

Impacts to Regional Industrial Lands

The Commission has advocated for the past several years that the City of Seattle review its industrial lands strategy. It is our view that Seattle's industrial lands are a valuable regional resource that accommodates significant employment, supports the city and regional economy, and provides a location for important infrastructure that contributes to making Seattle a livable place. We recognize the importance of industrial lands on a regional scope and the complicated set of relationships that are developed in a region's industrial network. We recommend the PSRC consider the economic needs of the industrial sector plus those of the region and accommodate those needs in your growth projections. We believe that success in supporting and promoting a thriving industrial sector is a key element of ensuring a thriving Puget Sound region in the future.

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability is another issue the Commission has spent a considerable amount of time and effort on in the past several years. We are a strong advocate for expanding housing choices and we want to make sure that the region's economic success and our desire to protect what makes Seattle so special does not simply price people out of their ability to live here. The City has some tools at its disposal to address those issues, but the problem is truly regional and will only be adequately addressed at that scale. Therefore, we recommend that the PSRC consider where population growth will be accommodated and how that will both influence and be influenced by affordability. Directing growth on a regional scale along with myriad decisions about the region's infrastructure is one of the most important aspects of your work in ensuring that we will live in a region that is accessible to everyone.

Transportation

The Commission feels strongly that land use and transportation policies need to be profoundly complementary. Transportation investment decisions should begin with the goal of providing an integrated, multi-modal system that reinforces walkable neighborhoods, local transit options and strong regional connections. A good first step would be to direct growth to areas that have the appropriate existing or planned transportation infrastructure in place such as would be the case in the Metropolitan and Larger Cities alternatives of the Vision 2020 Update. However, land use decisions are a complex undertaking and require balancing a host of criteria (including affordable housing and supporting viable industrial areas as mentioned earlier in this letter). Ultimately, what is most important is that the development of land use and transportation policies be an iterative process involving all the necessary government entities in a coordinated effort. Decision-making on transportation investments in the Puget Sound region is decentralized, the PSRC Vision 2020 Update is an opportunity to tie growth targets to transportation and encourage transportation agencies to make the best decisions to provide the appropriate service and facilities to meet the needs of the region.

Obviously there are many pieces to this process and, again, we commend the PSRC for the comprehensive approach you have taken to put all of these pieces together. The Commission looks forward to the revised DEIS and working with the Puget Sound Regional Council on this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jerry Finrow".

Jerry Finrow, Chair
Seattle Planning Commission

cc:
Mayor Nickels
Seattle City Council
Diane Sugimura, John Rahaim, Tom Hauger, DPD
Grace Crunican, Susan Sanchez, SDOT
Adrienne Quinn, Office of Housing